CLAIMS:

1.   A   processor-readable   medium   having   processor-executable instructions that, when executed by a processor, performs a method comprising:

receiving   a   unicast   acquisition   media-stream   transmission,   which corresponds to a target multicast media-stream transmission; .

decoding the content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission;

switching reception from the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission to the target multicast media-stream transmission.

2.   A   medium   as   recited   in   claim   1,   wherein   the   method   further comprises:

receiving an indication to change to a new channel, the new channel being the target multicast media-stream transmission;

requesting   the   target   multicast   media-stream   transmission,   wherein   the transmission is representative of the new channel.

3.   A   medium   as   recited   in   claim   1,   wherein   the   method   further comprises:

receiving an indication to change to a new channel, the new channel being represented   by   the   target   multicast   media-stream   transmission   and   the   unicast acquisition media-stream;

requesting the unicast acquisition media-stream which corresponds to the target multicast media-stream transmission;

4. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises presenting the decoded content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission.

5. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises decoding and presenting the decoded content of the target multicast media-stream transmission after the switching.

6. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the method further comprises requesting cessation of transmission of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission.

7. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

8. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission do not match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

9. A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the frames of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission are encoded using a lower bit-rate than that used by the target multicast media-stream transmission.

10.   A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the switching occurs before the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

11.   A medium as recited in claim 1, wherein the switching occurs during or close to the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

12.   A computing device comprising:

a media-stream presentation device;

a medium as recited in claim 1.

13. A processor-readable medium having processor-executable instructions that, when executed by a processor, performs a method comprising:

receiving a low bit-rate unicast acquisition media-stream transmission, which corresponds to a target normal bit-rate multicast media-stream transmission;

decoding the content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission;

receiving a normal bit-rat unicast intermediate media-stream transmission, which corresponds to a target multicast media-stream transmission;

switching reception from the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission to the unicast intermediate media-stream transmission;

decoding the content of the unicast intermediate media-stream transmission;

switching reception from the unicast intermediate media-stream transmission to the target multicast media-stream transmission.

14. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the method further comprises:

receiving an indication to change to a new channel, the new channel being the target multicast media-stream transmission;

requesting the target multicast media-stream transmission, wherein the transmission is representative of the new channel.

15. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the method further comprises presenting the decoded content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission.

16. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the method further comprises presenting the decoded content of the intermediate media-stream transmission.

17. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the method further comprises presenting the decoded content of the intermediate media-stream transmission after the switching from the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission.

18. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the method further comprises decoding and presenting the content of the target multicast media-stream transmission after the switching from the intermediate media-stream transmission.

19. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the method further comprises requesting cessation of transmission of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission.

20. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein frame properties of the intermediate media-stream transmission match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

21. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission do not match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

22. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the frames of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission are encoded using a lower bit-rate than that used by the intermediate media-stream transmission.

23. A medium as recited in claim 13, wherein the frames of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission are encoded using a lower bit-rate than that used by the target multicast media-stream transmission.

24. A computing device comprising:

a media-stream presentation device;

a medium as recited in claim 13.

25. A processor-readable medium having processor-executable instructions that, when executed by a processor, performs a method comprising:

requesting a target multicast media-stream transmission;

receiving a unicast acquisition media-stream transmission, where the content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission corresponds to that of the target multicast media-stream transmission;

decoding and presenting the content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission;

switching reception from the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission to the target multicast media-stream transmission.

26. A medium as recited in claim 25, wherein the method further comprises decoding and presenting the content of the target multicast media-stream transmission after the switching.

27. A medium as recited in claim 25, wherein the method further comprises requesting cessation of transmission of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission.

28. A medium as recited in claim 25, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

29. A medium as recited in claim 25, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission do not match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

30. A medium as recited in claim 25, wherein the frames of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission are encoded using a lower bit-rate than that used by the target multicast media-stream transmission.

31. A medium as recited in claim 25, wherein the switching occurs before the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

32. A medium as recited in claim 25, wherein the switching occurs during or close to the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

33. A computing device comprising:

a media-stream presentation device;

a medium as recited in claim 25.

34. A method facilitating fast channel-change, the method comprising:

requesting a target multicast media-stream transmission;

receiving a unicast acquisition media-stream transmission, where the content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission corresponds to that of the target multicast media-stream transmission;

decoding and presenting the content of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission;

switching reception from the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission to the target multicast media-stream transmission.

35. A method as recited in claim 34 further comprising decoding and presenting the decoded content of the target multicast media-stream transmission after the switching.

36. A method as recited in claim 34 further comprising requesting cessation of transmission of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission.

37. A method as recited in claim 34, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

38. A method as recited in claim 34, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission do not match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

39. A method as recited in claim 34, wherein the frames of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission are encoded using a lower bit-rate than that used by the target multicast media-stream transmission.

40. A method as recited in claim 34, wherein the switching occurs before the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

41. A method as recited in claim 34, wherein the switching occurs during or close to the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

42. A computer comprising one or more processor-readable media having processor-executable instructions that, when executed by the computer, perform the method as recited in claim 34.

43. A multimedia system comprising:

a receiver configured to receive both a unicast acquisition media-stream transmission and a target multicast media-stream transmission;

a decoding unit configured to decode both a unicast acquisition media-stream transmission and a target multicast media-stream transmission;

a splicing unit configured to splice from the reception of the unicast acquisition media-stream to the reception of the target multicast media-stream transmission

44. A system as recited in claim 43 further comprising a channel-change unit configured to receive an indication to change to a new channel and to request the target multicast media-stream transmission; wherein the transmission is representative of the new channel.

45. A system as recited in claim 43, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

46. A system as recited in claim 43, wherein frame properties of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission do not match those of the target multicast media-stream transmission.

47.   A system as recited in claim 43, wherein the frames of the unicast acquisition media-stream transmission are encoded using a lower bit-rate than that used by the target multicast media-stream transmission.

48.   A system as recited in claim 43, wherein the splicing unit is further configured to perform its splice before the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

49.   A system as recited in claim 43, wherein the splicing unit is further configured to perform its splice during or close to the reception of a random-access point (RAP) in the target multicast media-stream transmission.

50. A processor-readable medium having processor-executable instructions that, when executed by a processor, perform a method comprising:

receiving a request for transmission of a target multicast media-stream;

transmitting a unicast acquisition media-stream over a unicast communications network, where the unicast acquisition media-stream corresponds to the target multicast media-stream.

51. A medium as recited in claim 50 further comprising preparing for transmission the unicast acquisition media-stream based upon the same original content of the corresponding target multicast media-stream.

52. A medium as recited in claim 50 further comprising transmitting the requested target multicast media-stream over a multicast communications network.

53. A medium as recited in claim 50, wherein the unicast acquisition media-stream is encoded using a lower bit-rate than its corresponding target multicast media-stream.

54. A computing device comprising:

a transmitting device for transmitting one or more media-streams via both unicast and multicast communications networks;

a medium as recited in claim 50.